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USAFRICOM FOR STRATEGY PLANS AND PROGRAMS (MC) SOUTHERN
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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT KHAMA OPEN TO NEW APPROACHES ON CKGR AND

REFUGEES; PESSIMISTIC ON ZIMBABWE

Classified By: Ambassador K. Canavan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: President Khama says he is ready to move ahead on the problems of the San who were relocated from the CKGR, and will use a widely-praised former community management plan as a guideline. He also is breaking with past policy by saying he is willing to allow HIV-positive refugees to receive government anti-retroviral drug treatment, so long as the costs are borne by donors. He is pessimistic about the situation in Zimbabwe, and is considering what measures he would take if the Mugabe regime steals the election. End summary.

12. (C) President Ian Khama took the occasion of Ambassador Canavan's final call upon him to break new ground on two significant issues:

-- He related that he had met recently with Roy Sesana of First Peoples of the Kalahari, and other representatives of the San who were displaced from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) in the government's controversial relocations of 1997-2003. He said the meeting had gone well and that he had suggested that an older community and wildlife management plan known as Management Plan 3 would be a good starting point for resolving many of the current issues related to the San. The plan includes provisions for consultations with the San, and for their sustainable use of the natural resources in and round the reserve. (Note: Management Plan 3 has been widely praised since its development several years ago, but no effort was made to implement it after the San brought a court case against the government. Returning to this plan as a way forward would mark a significant change from the government's long-standing inertia on the issue. End note.) President Khama says he has instructed the Minister of Environment, Wildlife, and Tourism to make any needed updates to Management Plan 3 and to prepare for consultations with the San.

-- Ambassador Canavan raised the issue of the government's refusal to allow HIV-positive non-citizen refugees to receive anti-retroviral drug therapy, and noted that some recently arrived Zimbabwean refugees had been on ARV treatment before fleeing Zimbabwe, and would now be forced off of their treatment. President Khama said that the problem came down to cost -- Botswana simply was not able to pay for ARV treatment for temporarily-resident foreigners, especially given that such generosity could well lure many additional foreigners whose home countries did not have free ARV programs. Ambassador Canavan advised the President that UNHCR and foreign donors led by the United States were fully prepared to cover the costs of ARVs for refugees in Botswana, at which point the President said that with that financial support "it would be unconscionable" not to provide treatment. He agreed to convey this directly to the Minister of Health. (Note: One of the concerns that has been expressed by some in the Cabinet is the unpredictability of foreign financial support. End note.)

13. (C) Concerning Zimbabwe, the President said that "Mugabe

is totally out of control," and that "It is hard to imagine how the SADC monitors will be able to say this election was free and fair." If Mugabe is declared the winner after all that has happened during the campaign, Khama said, "He should not be recognized as president." Khama said he personally would find it almost impossible to attend any SADC function that a newly-inaugurated Mugabe was attending.

¶4. (C) Continuing on Zimbabwe. President Khama said he was pessimistic about the outcome of the election process, and also not optimistic about getting many other SADC countries to take a firmer line. He said he has been "mystified" by South African President Mbeki's approach to his role as SADC mediator on Zimbabwe, and he told the following story as an example. On the margins of a meeting in Japan, SADC Chair President Mwanawasa asked Mbeki to give a briefing on his efforts to the SADC heads of state who were present. Mbeki coolly declined, Khama said, on the grounds that he reported to the SADC Organ on Security, not to the SADC Chair or member heads of state. When Mwanawasa replied that the Organ was subservient to the SADC heads of state, Mbeki still refused. This "amazing" episode revealed much about Mbeki's completely ineffective approach to his mandate, Khama thought, and showed how little anyone should expect from him.

¶5. (C) Comment: As vice president, Khama was focused but restrained in meetings -- much more of a listener than a speaker, and ever careful to stay within the boundaries of government policy. As president, despite being in office less than three months, Khama seems a new man -- relaxed, confident, and notably more prepared to engage in creative discussion. He has long had a reputation for being "decisive" -- but whether that was a positive or a negative description depended on who was making the observation. So far, it is a description that this mission would apply to his presidency with distinct approval. End comment.

CANAVAN